

To: Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)
Agricultural Marketing Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Title: **Final Report for Agreement #12-25-G-0417:
Singapore Horticulture Program**



Submitted by: The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Phyllis McCranie, Development Representative Supervisor
Division of Marketing and Development

Date: August 31, 2005

Abstract

With the ever expanding global marketplace, trade barriers are being lifted and new trade relations are developing. A new trade opportunity with Singapore opened as a result of the January 2004 U.S. – Singapore Trade Agreement. Considered the hub of Malaysia, China and Indonesia, Singapore stands to be a very important entry point for Florida agriculture. Singaporeans are also known for their avid interest in orchids and ornamental flowers, making this a potentially lucrative market. Florida leads the nation in sales of potted foliage for indoor use with sales of \$459.7 million during 2002. Florida's orchid production has risen steadily, increasing from 3.2 million pots sold in 2001 to 6.5 million pots sold in 2004.

In 2004, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) applied for and received a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture Federal Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) to explore the market potential for orchids and other floriculture in Singapore and other areas of Southeast Asia.

Project Description

The methodology of the study had a two prong approach. The first approach was to learn from the appropriate trade segments. The second approach was to obtain the opinions of the Singapore consumer. To complete the first prong, FDACS staff, along with researcher Dr. Phillip Downs of Kerr & Downs Research and USDA Agriculture Trade Officer, Bernard Kong, met with eleven Singaporean producers, retailers, importers and exporters March 12th-17th, 2005. All participants welcomed the

researchers with warm hospitality and were open and eager to share their knowledge and opinions. To round out the research, the second prong included identifying the perspectives of local Singaporean consumer about orchids and horticulture via a focus group on April 2, 2005.

Questions for the in-depth interviews were developed by FDACS staff and Dr. Phillip Downs after seeking input from the Florida horticulture industry regarding key issues and concerns. These questions were adjusted on an as needed basis during the interviews. The focus group format and questions were based on what was learned during the interviews. Attachment 1 to this report is the focus group transcripts.

Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the market demand for Florida orchids in Singapore and other areas of Southeast Asia. More specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

- Increase understanding of the Singapore floriculture market and explore ways that Florida producers could participate in the newly opened trade agreement between Singapore and the U.S.
- Develop marketing recommendations for assisting Florida growers
- Educate Florida producers about the Singapore market

Discoveries

Based on the in-depth interviews with Singaporean professionals in the floriculture industry and a focus group with women from upscale households, the following facts and perceptions were uncovered.

- The Singapore government controls land usage and it has de-emphasized production of orchids by ending research funding.
- Most Singapore orchid production has migrated to Malaysia.
- Singapore businesses have established critical trading contacts in the floriculture industry with companies throughout Asia, Europe, Australia and the United States.
- Singapore exports its highest quality orchids and sells the rest domestically.
- A significant percentage of “Singapore” orchids are imported from Malaysia, Thailand, and Taiwan.
- Many Singaporean floriculture growers and brokers own businesses in Malaysia, China and other nearby countries.
- Orchids are not considered a “special” flower to Singapore consumers.
- There is some potential to position Florida-grown orchids as premium orchids that would support higher prices to cover shipping costs. Upscale consumers throughout Asia have demonstrated the means and the desire for purchasing merchandise that is considered premium.

Critical Findings

The following findings address the Singapore and Asian market potential for Florida producers.

- There are opportunities for Florida orchid growers to partner with Singapore companies in fulfilling a market niche. It will be imperative that Florida growers identify Singapore business partners.

- One promising business model is based on providing high quality, unique varieties of cut orchids that are not marketed on price. It will be very difficult for Florida growers to meet prices of Malaysian and Thailand orchids that are exported through Singapore.
- Florida growers will need to offer durable cut orchids with shelf lives of 7 to 9 days since 2 days are lost in shipping to Singapore due to the time difference.
- Another promising business model is to export unique, high quality potted orchids. Again, it will be difficult for Florida growers to compete on price. With the world and Southeast Asian economies expanding, there is an opportunity for Florida growers to be players in partnership with Singapore businesses in high-end Southeast Asian markets.
- There is definite interest among Singaporean orchid growers in exploring partnership opportunities with Florida growers. There was discussion and interest about the opportunity for a reverse trade mission to Florida so some of the Singaporean growers and businessmen could begin developing these relationships. Exploring this concept was encouraged by Singaporean ATO Bernard Kong.
- Toh Peng San, the “dean” of the Singaporean orchid industry was interested in a reverse trade mission but believed that Florida growers would show more profit potential by selling their orchids in the U.S. rather than exporting to or through Singapore.
- Shipping time, freight costs and labor costs are three critical disadvantages facing Florida growers interested in exporting to Singapore.
- Another potential business model for Florida growers is to provide extra supply to Singapore growers and brokers during high demand periods such as the Chinese New Year, end of the year and special high floral volume occasions.

From a regulatory export/import standpoint, the requirements consist of two steps on the permitting process of exporting orchids from Florida. The first is the USDA’s “Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) permit”. The second will be a phyto-sanitary permit issued through Division of Plant Industry (DPI).

The “Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) permit” required will depend on the type of orchid to be shipped. Orchids listed under CITES and/or the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that have been grown from seeds, cuttings, divisions, or other propagules under controlled conditions require CITES and/or ESA documents. Some may qualify for a CITES exemption certificate for artificially propagated plants, others may need an export permit or re-export certificate.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, Florida growers interested in expanding their sales should proceed with two strategies.

- Focus on expanding the United States domestic market for orchids. This will require educating U.S. consumers about the mystique and allure that orchids generate in Asia.
- Work with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to arrange a reverse trade mission with Singapore growers and brokers. This mission will help Florida growers establish critical contacts with future

business partners and to discuss, in-depth, which orchid varieties from the U.S. would have the most potential for Asian markets.

Educating Florida Producers

The detailed research findings, recommendations and a list of the Singaporean participants were provided to Florida producers through two methods. A full color booklet “Exploring Demand for Florida Orchids in Singapore” (attachment 2) was printed and distributed via mail to 86 Florida producers and associated businesses and organizations. It was also posted on the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ website, www.florida-agriculture.com.

Budget Information

The totals below represent the expenditures. Financial statement (SF 269A) will be submitted by the FDACS Finance and Accounting Division

▪ FDACS In-kind

Personnel	\$32,068.52
Supplies/postage/printing	<u>2,920.93</u>
FDACS TOTAL	\$34,989.45

▪ Federal

Research Consultant	\$25,000.00
Travel	<u>8,419.99</u>
	\$33,419.99

ATTACHMENT I

(Singapore) Joshua Research Consultants Discussion Outline – Orchid Focus Group Focus Group April 2, 2005 – Private Individuals

Lynn - A
Jeannie Wee - B
Adeline Wong - C
Dolly Chooi-D
Sock Kim- E
Toh Siew Chin- F
Ruth Ong- G
Chen Yee Fen-H
Jessie Chew

M: Would you introduce yourself, you're.. Whose's in your family?

A: I am a mother of two; my girls are only about 8 and 9, primary 2 and 3. I work so basically my whole family, and then we leave it to the maid to help us. I work in the airline company but I do, I am on the administrative side. So...

M:but still gets privileges.

A: Yeah. Privileges travel every year for the whole family, my contract allows me to have up to 4 children to travel free but I stop at two.

M: Can we pretend to be your children?

A: Have you packed in my cargo bag and bring you in. Yeah, so I do all the admin side, so I do all the cabin crew, and I am naturally based at the training center so pilots will come for training as well. So it is a very interesting area to work in, basically cabin crew side, cabin crew division where I am in , unlike finance or accounting , there are more fun loving people and very casual and you know and interesting.

B : Okay, I'm Jeannie. I'm still single. I have two brothers and my parents and they are currently in China, enjoying themselves while I'm stuck here because I'm actually working with a consumer product company. So, yeah...

M: They are in China for holiday or?

B: Holiday for 2 weeks, I will be at home for 2 weeks alone.

M: So you can do havoc to the house?

B: I was supposed to do havoc but in the end it was just going home after work, you are so tired, yeah so like...

M: Ok.

C: Adeline, mother of two, I work in the financial industry.

M: That is all?

C: yeah.

M: That is all about yourself?

C: Don't know, mother of two...

M: How old are your children?

C: My oldest one is 4; youngest is about 2 and half.

M: 4 and 2 and half, nice age. Adeline, you may have to speak louder, when we are going into the, discussion proper.

A: You mean we ask questions?

M: Sorry?

A: Ask them questions also?

M: Yeah. Sure if you want to know more about Adeline.

A: How she manage the two children?

C: Oh, my mother helps to take care.

M: Your mother stays with you?

C: No, no.

M: Oh, you bring your kids to her?

C: Actually my time is quite flexible.

M: Dolly

D: I'm a mother of one. My son is overseas studying.

M: Wow!

D: Wow, cost a lot too. Yeah and I'm still.

M: In the states?

D: Ah, no, in Australia, right

C: Slightly cheaper but still expensive. Getting more and more expensive actually.

M: Australia?

C: compared to when I was there.

D: And the exchange rate also goes up.

C: yeah. Their money is stronger now.

D: I'm working.

M: in order to support him right?

D: yes, so. With administration side, more to the administration side.

M: so that means that now just you and your husband in the house.

D: with a dog.

M: okay, at least not so bored. What breed?

D: Dane, Great Dane.

M: So besides dog, what else do you do in your free time?

D: just walk around Gulin, you know I'm staying at Gulin, because I am staying in, near Bedok side.

M: so you see a lot of greenery and nature and things over there. So you don't pluck the flowers around there right?

D: No, not supposed to.

M: so if can, you would?

D: I try not to.

M: okay. Anything else you would like to know from Dolly? How is life without the son?

D: Tends to miss him. At least can talk to him on the phone.

M: Nowadays luckily, I mean international calls are quite inexpensive.

D: yeah cheap.

C: but it is cheaper for him to call here I think. It's still cheaper for him to call here.

(Someone walks in)

M: Hi Ruth, we all decided you will have a special performance. Yeah, we are actually just going one round introducing ourselves, to get to know a little bit more about each other, okay.

D: I think that is all.

M: So you intend to fly over?

D: oh yes. I just came back and, last month and going back end of this month.

M: Wah, monthly visits.

D: He is coming back this 2 weeks

M: and then after you fly over again?

A: then I must make sure she travels on Singapore Airlines.

M: can.

A: Must encourage them to travel more. Airtime to advertise.

M: Sok Kim?

E: I'm a teacher in a primary school. I am living with my parents, I'm single, brother living with us, two sisters who are married. Have their own families, so what else do you want to know?

A: Oh, I got a lot of questions as teacher.

M: What do you do in your free time, hobby?

E: Teachers don't really have free time.

M: what is your hobby?

E: I pick up a book to read, mostly novels and I go to the internet to write e-mails. I write a lot of e-mails. That is part of hobby, I write to friends who are overseas.

A: So you like writing, keeping in touch with them. There are a lot of flowers for teacher's day.

M: Do you?

E: Fake ones. Everlasting.

M: Everlasting?

D: Roses are not everlasting but the fragrance is there,

E: Err, yeah true,

D: The smell is there rather than everlasting.

M: but she has no choice right? The children give it to her.

D: Mothers, it's a primary school, so it's the mothers.

F: Hi, I'm Siew Chin. I'm in the finance sector. So everything I do is rather boring, so I find interest in flowers where I am close to colorful things.

M: So when you say your interest is flowers means that you actually...

F: I like flower arrangements, flower arrangements. So actually I go and pick up some courses in CC (Community centres) which, it enhances my confidence of arranging it, yeah.

M: So you do for yourself or you do your friends?

F: I do it for the church.

M: Which church are you from?

F: First evangelical reform.

M: Let's go and check on her local arrangement.

F: so, I just don't have any preference, so both fresh and artificial I like.

M: okay. But it's very different right?

F: Erm ,yeah, artificial tends to be a little bit still but I think they have improved quite a lot so it looks real, so not so bad.

M: Okay, Ruth!

G: Okay, I'm Ruth, I just retired last year, before that I was in the HR in an American company.

M: Ruth you have to speak a bit louder because we are taping.

G: I was in the HR and I worked in the company for 36 years. Now I got all the time to do whatever I plan to do. So I spend my time, yes I travel. Since I retired, I traveled 3 times already. I spend my time in community service, doing, helping the rehab of my church, organization; we have a rehab, of course doing whatever home ministry for church group and all that. And that is how I spend my time.

M: Great. Okay, Christina.

H: Hi, I'm Christina. I'm an engineer with a bio pharmaceutical company so I distil the equipment. I'm married, no kids yet but we are staying with our in laws.

D: You stay with your in laws? I think you must be a very good girl.

M: How long have you been staying with your in laws?

H: About a year and a half.

M: Okay, that is pretty long keeping a good relationship still, very good.

H: I think we will be staying quite a while longer, I think.

M: Have Children, then you have someone to take care. I'm Rena. I will be facilitating this group. This is actually my additional hobby or job. I do have a full time job which is in the financial sector. Anyway, today is not about me, just very interested to know how frequently you buy flowers. If you don't mind, Adeline, can you please help to pass around the paper and the pen. I need you to just write down, okay. How many times in the past 3 months have you purchased cut flowers for yourself? Ya, or for someone else also counted. In the past 3 months. Just write a figure there, is it okay? Estimation, don't have to be so exact. Oh ya, Ruth, if you don't mind, can you put your phone to silent mode?

Please take a few seconds and **write down** how many times in the past 3 months you have purchased *cut flowers* for yourself or someone else. Just estimate if you cannot recall exactly.
(Go quickly around the table and have each person give their number)

M: Okay, so Christina,

H: Twice.

M: For yourself or for somebody else?

H: For other people.

M: for other people, was there an occasion?

H: Yeah, my classmate gave birth to her daughter so I sent her a bouquet of flowers, and then Valentine's Day.

M: Must be for husband, so sweet of you. Then do you usually send flowers only on special occasions?

H: Yeah, I would say so, for cut flowers.

M: For cut flowers. Okay. Ruth?

G: Four times. Actually it's 3 times but tomorrow one more time coming. So I say 4 times

M: who do you buy flowers for tomorrow?

G: We have our rotation; buy for the church on Sunday.

M: So do you do the flower arrangement as well?

G: Yes I do but I am not very good at it.

M: Learn from Siew Chin

G: We do have an expert in it; we just do the touch up.

M: So you are in charge of buying the flowers?

G: We go on a rotation basis, we have a few ladies, so this week is me, and next week is somebody else. So almost 2 months ago once, sometimes in between there are something else then we just buy.

M: So besides for the church, do you buy any for yourself?

G: Maybe Chinese New Year.

M: Chinese New Year, okay. Siew Chin?

F: Two times

M: that would be for?

F: Sometimes for friends, sometimes for church.

M: So in the last 3 months would be for whom?

F: One is for my friends, one is for their Hari Raya, festival going on, and so I will try to make something for them.

M: So you arrange something on your own and give to them?

F: Yeah, so. I prefer it to do it on my own so I can shop around, depends on what type of theme I want, what the designs , all this.

M: So you make the flower arrangement to give to someone else. Okay.

F: yeah.

M: Sok Kim?

E: Once.

M: Once in the last 3 months?

E: During the New Year period.

M: oh during the New Year period.

E: definitely once.

M: Other than that, do you have the habit of buying flowers?

E: not really. Usually I help my mom to buy flowers; she needs it for the house, for praying.

M: for praying, okay.

E: Other than that I can't remember but there are times I buy flowers for school, for the school, but not very recently. The one I remembered was last year.

M: Okay. Dolly?

D: I think about twice. Some church members, very close to me, birthdays.

M: Birthdays?

Mother's day, me personally I buy for them.

M: that would be last year right? Less than 3 months?

D: Not.

M: How about Adeline?

C: Ten times. Chinese New year, then friends delivered baby, friends got into hospital, Valentine's Day, praying.

M: Oh, so you do buy flowers on a regularly because you pray.

C: I do, twice a month.

M: Twice a month, that is the main reason for buying flowers, on a fixed basis, I mean other than that you do buy flowers for other people.

C: I also do flower design.

M: Okay. Jeannie?

B: Only 2 times, once is when my dad in hospital, I want to humor him so I bought him flowers. Yeah he was very happy, excited when somebody gives him something, he was in the hospital for quite a while, a month or so. So he is always excited when somebody brings him something, so I will buy flowers for him, to humor him. Then the other time is actually for a friend's birthday, so I actually got it to send from other side.

M: you arrange for the local florist over?

B: There to send. I got actually an Australian florist over there to send, to send over to my friend, just pay by credit card.

M: Lynn?

A: for the last 3 months about 3 times. Once was during Chinese New Year, another time was when a friend visited Singapore, went to his place, we got him some orchids and other time was a colleagues birthday. So I bought to surprise her cause we don't normally give girls to girl roses.

M: So you bought her roses?

A: Just a bouquet.

Now please **write down** how many times in the past 3 months you have purchased *potted plants (flowers)* for yourself or for someone else. Again, just estimate if you cannot recall exactly. (Go quickly around the table and have each person give their number)

M: besides flowers that are cut flowers, that what we are talking about, do you buy potted flowers, so maybe you want to think about maybe last 3 months, have you bought any potted flowers? How many times you have bought potted plants? Flowers that are planted in a pot will not die after 2, 3 days. Who you bought it from? I believe all of you got the answer so let's start with Christina again.

H: Yeah.4 times.

M: What kind of flowers do you buy?

H: orchids, usually buy about 2 pots of flowers, I put it in the house, so I guess they always tell us to buy like the red ones, yeah.

M: that is because of the Chinese New year period. **Other than the Chinese New Year Period do you flowers for the house?**

H: Flowers and plants.

M: flowers and plants, so you plant it inside or outside?

H: We do, we stay in a landed property so spacious enough...

M: So it is usually outside?

H: and some indoors as well.

M: some indoors, do you leave in a pot or you actually plant it?

H: Some in the ground some in the pot.

M: Do you give orchid plants as gifts?

H: no. not really only for our own purpose.

M: Okay. How about Ruth?

G: 3 times

M: For church?

G: No, for my house. I like flowers but I don't like to plant because I am scared stiff of worms. The first time the gardener did for us and I did not really take care of it. Well, so I did not water and after some time it died. So the next month, he came, bought new plants again, in fact maybe 4 times so not very expensive ones maybe 10, 20, 30 dollars that type. So planted again, one of the times, dogs came, he used his legs and dig up all the plants. Because I get people to come and do it for me, I am very scared of worms again.

F: why not do it yourself?

G: I will water it but when I see a worm I get very scared, the third time is again Chinese New Year, we bought the Chinese New Year plants and that is about all.

M: so those that you get gardeners to put into your ground, what kind do you choose?

G: Actually he choose for me, brought me to the Mandai garden, Seletar garden, he says this one easy plant, since you do not how to plant, so ok this one, whatever plants he tell me but some are beauty plants, some are just this small little yellow flowers and orange flowers.

M: Siew Chin?

F: For me I think once, last year. I joined my friend to buy, so managed to get some potted plants. Actually it is supposed to be for my friend but did not really turn up well, end up storing at my house.

M: Besides having been tricked, do you have a habit of buying potted plants?

F: yes, but not really, just potted flowers can last a bit longer, maybe for the office, own office.

M: Sock Hin

E: last 3 months, 3 times. Chinese New year, most times we have to buy potted plants to decorate the classroom. We had quite a number of pots; some are green plants, and some flowering plants.

M: Dolly?

D: Besides homes in Singapore and Australia, for the office, after January before I leave for Australia,

M: before you leave, you buy the plant?

D: My husband is there.

M: So sweet, you buy to remember you

D: He takes good care of the plants and it blooms when I come back.

M: Actually he cannot go anywhere.

D: Office

M: For your own boss or for general office?

D: General.

M: Is that your passion or is that you are on duty to buy the plant?

D: no, I just happen to buy, very nice arranges, beautiful.

M: so you bought it to decorate the office. Adeline?

C: Twice. During Chinese New Year and once for last week.

M: So why do you buy potted flower?

C: Because I have this big, big urn at the balcony, so put water lily and I put guppies inside.

M: Jeannie?

B: I think 5 times, all different pots of flowers every time, I mean the last times I bought a cactus, but before that definitely violet seeds, easy to grow, doesn't need a lot of sunlight can put it in the home or I put it out in the balcony, it is all flowering flowers actually.

M: For your house?

B: for my house, for my own pleasure. But my mom would complain, because she is actually a RC member, she say better not plant in water too much because of the mosquitoes so every day after I water the flowers, I actually have to take the excessive water then throw it away, then she is okay about that but now they are happy because there is something to look at when they look out of the balcony, it's like flowers there, I want to expand that.

M: Okay.

A: I think for the last 3 months , 3 times because Chinese New Year I bought the chrysanthemums, basically I like potted plants but the problem is that my place don't have enough sunlight. What I have been told is that flowering plants need a lot of sunlight, so I am always tempted to buy them, so I end up buying Jasmine, rose from those potted. The first time that you bring home is beautiful but after it just stop flowering anymore but the plants still survive. And then that is it. Very nice.

M: Any one of you buy potted orchid? Ok and you plant it at the balcony as well?

B: Because my mom likes orchids during Chinese New Year. She did not buy it because my dad was in hospital. Orchids is nice, I especially like those really purple ones, I like the bigger ones with whitish, pokka dots, but usually throw away after it finished flowering, actually can grow, but she got no patience like that but now that I am guarding it, I think next year she is going to get it because I can look after it for her.

Are you more likely to purchase cut flowers and plants for **special occasions** or to purchase them on a **regular basis** and not for a special occasion?

M: Do you usually send flowers or buy flowers for special occasions or to give to friends, is it a normal habit? So besides Chinese New Year, what kind of occasion would you buy?

A: Mother's Day.

M: Mother's day, Birthday,

C: Weddings.

M: Weddings, okay, hospital.

A: Valentine's, Anniversaries

E: Wakes.

M: Wakes, okay, for Mother's Day what kind of flowers would you give?

A: Mother's day so far I don't receive.

B: Who give you on Mother's Day?

A: Yeah it's from my husband.

C: Ah

A: oh, they know I like roses so.

M: They give you roses.

M: What would you give for mother's day?

E: My mom, I think I will give her orchids but she also like roses, depending on her mood, sometimes she says eh, roses so nice, and then sometimes she would think carnations very nice. Depends on her mood at that time.

M: Bring her along to buy?

H: Huh? Ya. I ask her, "Hey what flowers you want?" I don't mind but cut flowers will die, you want to buy, buy me potted flowers if you want. Potted ones so you want.

(Garbled discussion)

M: Adeline?

C: Carnations or Roses.

M: What do you think is more suitable for Mother's day?

C: Usually I buy myself.

M: Dolly? What do you?

D: Mother's day I never buy.

M: What do you receive then on Mother's Day?

D: hmm, I buy flowers for my church friends, roses.

M: So buy roses. Interesting? Sock Kim?

E: I never buy flowers for my mother on Mother's Day; my mothers will say it is such a waste. I think carnation would make a good flower to give.

M: Siew Chin?

F: I think roses or carnations.

G: I don't buy flowers because I don't have a mother because my mother has gone back to be with the Lord. But, I still like roses too like other girls. If there is opportunity I would buy just one stalk for someone.

H: Roses and carnations.

M: Valentine's would be mainly roses.

H: actually it depends you know because if you send it to a guys then it would be sunflowers or different flowers, yeah

M: for girls?

H: Girls? Yeah I usually try to get different types, I don't like getting just one type, yeah, and there is certain meaning to the flowers so that makes sense.

M: Interesting. What is the meaning to the flowers, you mention roses, for Mother's Day?

H: Roses because my mom like roses but roses means I love to so that's one of the reasons why it's like that.

M: Carnation?

H: Carnation kind of defines moms I mean, it is like that they are always there. I mean when you are kid.

M: so you all agree is the symbolization?

H: anyway when we are kids that is what they always say

A: I think the colors, for me, myself, more the colors. I seldom go for light colors, yellow I would go more for, or orangey.

M: not the type of flowers.

A: more in colors

M: So for Valentine's Day, what do you think would be a nice flower?

A: What flowers? On Valentine's Day, roses. Of course colors, light roses, I think roses but I think they should come in different colors. But not white of course, can come in other colors. Nice roses and it come in other colors, peach roses, as long as it is not white roses.

M: So you must ask the florist, this one doesn't trust.

A: I think that one.

E: Purple ones

H: blue ones

M: What kind of flowers would when you buy for yourself? What are the usual kinds of flowers?

A: Tulips

M: Tulips? What would you buy for your husband for Valentine's?

A: Not flowers.

M: Would you give flowers for Valentine's to a friend?

A: Yeah.

M: What kind of flowers?

A: the last time I get was sunflowers. More for guys rather than roses.

C: less feminine.

M: Tulips? For yourself? The rest of you? You buy flowers for yourself, what would you buy?

H: Tulips. If I happen to see that I would definitely buy that because it is very, very rare. Really.

M: That means you hardly buy for yourself? What about you?

E: Tulips.

M: You like tulips also?

E: I tried once buying from Far East Flora, but it did not last long. It is quite expensive.

A: Very expensive.

E: In compare to the others but they are very pretty.

F: For me I don't have a particular type of preference but I like comfy things so I look for brighter colors so color is more important.

M: Than the type

F: Yeah.

G: I like lilies the white ones. The Tiger Lilies are very pretty so you put down in the tall grass.

M: but they are also pretty expensive right?

G: not too bad, I think it depends on the flowers also, some roses if the stalk are very long, it is also pretty expensive.

D: I like roses and lilies.

M: Okay

H: I like all kinds of flowers I cannot decide. That is why I always come out of the flower shop empty handed because if I buy all of the flowers I am going to be very broke. So, don't buy , get one pot because cut flowers, I feel is a pity because after few days start to droop and the moment you step out, just go to the bathtub, it starts straightening already you know.

E: so fast?

H: Yeah, especially when the sun is really hot in the day, so it is like, so I don't like to see that look, I like that fresh look, and one is growing and it is so beautiful

DISCUSS

For *which special occasions* do you purchase *cut flowers*?

For which special occasions do you purchase *potted plants*?

(Take the 3 or 4 most frequently mentioned special occasions)

For (name special occasion), what type of flowers or plants do you purchase?

DISCUSS

(Repeat for 3 or 4 most frequently mentioned special occasions)

Are their special occasions for which orchids are the best flower or plant to purchase?

DISCUSS

M: Usually what kind of occasion would you give an orchid?

A: I think it is when my friends come from overseas, usually that is the flower that I give them.

M: why?

A: because you don't get it often at their place, the country that they come from. My close friends are from Japan and Australia, so down there they kind of expensive, so when they come here I don't bring them roses, or something like lilies or things like, they may have even nicer flowers that I am not too familiar with but orchids are something that they don't get and I usually go with those bright purple color, pretty bright yellow and yeah, and it is not so costly compared to those other.

M: so you think the cost is reasonable, something that your friend don't...

A: And then it last compared to the other flower, those other flowers that I bought, I bought lilies before and like she says like if they die very fast and then the water, really terrible smell. Constantly have to change it, and then orchids are not too bad. I try, I don't know when you try the flowers is not so, the smell.

M: You give the cut orchids not the potted orchid's right? When do you think potted orchids would be suitable?

A: Orchids? Potted orchids.

M: Did anybody give?

H: House warming. It is a very good gift and it lasts. The price is reasonable, the nice one is like 40 plus, yeah the flowers are very nice and it can last for a few months, they give good health, house warming.

M: Have you done that before?

G: My sister, not me, she loves orchids. She bought for her friends, so, but I never buy it for my friends

M: So house warming. Did you?

E: I just take it; actually it will make a good gift for guys. It is a hardly plant or flower, you know guys are not very good with flowers so you get one that can last long, you just pluck it there and it will be okay rather than give them roses that after a while it will die.

M: What purpose?

E: For their birthday? Maybe Valentine's day would be a good one because different. I think.

E: Hospital visits.

M: What flowers did you buy your father when he was in hospital?

E: I actually gave him chrysanthemums. It was a mix of chrysanthemums and baby breaths I think, it was put together so it looked quite nice. Because it was part of a hamper, he likes flowers and the hamper itself. He goes for the package, nowadays people go for that.

M: what kind of an occasion do you think that orchids would be a suitable flower?

A: Potted orchids?

M: Or even cut ones.

A: Weddings. I use for decorating or creative one.

M: Other than for weddings, what else would you use cuts orchids?

A: I use it for praying. More lasting and when you tie with rubber band, it looks very nice.

M: Dolly?

E: I usually give orchids to my overseas friends especially Japanese,, that is why I was thinking of brush painting, I was thinking of those Japanese ladies, they say they like orchids so I brought them to a garden, so I ask them which ones you want? So that is where I buy orchids for them.

M: So besides gifts for friends, overseas friends, what other occasions would you give orchids?

E: Pots to hang at your house, potted orchids, friends I seldom give pots.

A: Like me also, I have also done bouquets also, hand bouquets.

M: Hand bouquets?

A: Hand bouquets.

M: Siew Chin?

F: Sometimes in class you get some exposure from doing the arrangement for, but our instructor would do all the arrangement for us.

M: So who do you give orchids to?

F: Normally to those Europeans and those people from overseas.

M: is that a common thing? I thought there is, they don't tend to give orchid.

H: I actually buy them when they very exotic. I get them for my mother in law. She likes orchids but usually when I see one exotic looking one that is it, I will get it, other than the local or common varieties.

A: To Europeans, it is very exotic but to us it is just very common. You feel that it is too common that is why you actually don't, unless it is exotic.

H: Well, if I give it to a friend then I wouldn't get the more varieties, I would get the more exotic rather than the normal that you see all the time.

A: So I think our national flower is something, so I think we see it quite often. I am going to give it to you and you are also a Singaporean and so you won't find special as if I were to give you a tulip or something. Wah, you hardly buy something like that so if I buy it for you, it would be very nice. I mean but if I give orchids, they are easily available and all over the place.

G: Some case, is like my pastor's wife from Finland, let's say you give her orchids like you a pack real nice bouquet of orchids, by the time she reaches her hometown, it is still very fresh, she is really happy and show it to her friends and they are very happy to receive them as a farewell gift.

F: If you go to a florist in overseas, they have roses, tulips and everything they have because their weather except orchids, so it is really unique.

A: I don't think we do see Singaporean giving you a box of orchids, probably some other flowers.

M: So the main issue is, it is too common locally to be appreciated. Is that what you mean?

G: You see it so often you know, everywhere you go is orchids.

M: But everywhere also grows what?

A: But then if you are talking about orchids, I have seen in Japan have roses where orchids are kept in the cold part and it is so big you know, for us orchids, is very very beautiful, you want to have a second look again because they are really those exotic types of orchids. So if I really want to give to a Singaporean friend I would give those and they cost a bomb.

M: How much are you willing to pay for a cut stem? To pay for a stalk of orchid?

G: 80 or 90 cents.

D: 70 cents, unless it is more exotic, then it will cost more.

M: So if it is the more exotic ones, what is a reasonable price?

A: \$3.50.

M: You feel that that is fine because...

M: So can you recognize from the orchid where they are planted? Where is it planted in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand or somewhere else?

A: Where they are planted? Yea, I saw some in Botanical and in Mandai.

M: So, if you see orchids, you assume that they are planted in Singapore, yeah. So if there are orchids that are imported would you be able to tell that they are imported?

H: Usually the guy at the nursery will tell you it's from overseas.

F: They also give you hint whether it is locally or imported from overseas.

M: So from the price and when they tell you, but from the look? Would you think there would be a difference where it would be planted?

E: I don't think so.

G: If you go to the Botanical Gardens, you won't know because there are so many types if it is a special from overseas.

A: The only one that I could tell is like the one, the florist, they are real big the orchids, he will tell you, fake one the orchids, and I think it is a cross breed and so they put it in a different basket

F: Sometimes I would go there and take a look. It's quite cheap and the there is a variety.

M: So to you it does not matter where the orchids are from, would you pay more if the orchids are grown in Singapore because it is direct from Singapore, direct from the nursery and would you be willing to pay a bit more?

A: Pay a bit more because it is from Singapore? No. Pay less if it is from here right? You double pay for freight charges.

B: What she meant those cut from the gardens and then sells them straight?

G: Those should be even cheaper because you buy direct from the market.

C: Giving to someone who is overseas, I don't mind because is actually from Singapore, you just cut it and give it to you. The thinking it would be more expensive, I don't mind. But giving to someone in Singapore, ok whichever is cheaper.

M: So if imported, you are willing to pay more?

E: No

M: Potted orchids, how much are you willing to pay for a pot of orchids?

A: How many stalks?

M: Potted orchids don't go by one stalk. Which ever think that would attract you? Because some of you say that you buy potted orchids so what do you think is a reasonable pot of orchids?

C: The normal species, 12 dollars per pot,

H: The one that is not so common I would pay for 30 to 40 dollars

A: Except for Chinese New year where the prices are pushed up.

M: How much higher?

A: Like 18 to 20 dollars for normal species. 50 dollars for different.

M: Soo Chin?

F: About 15 to 20 dollars

M: Let's stop about flowers and talk about something else at the moment. If you go along Orchard road and go into a branded shop Gucci, Versace, all these are branded from Italy and would you pay like a \$1000 plus for a bag because it is imported, it is branded? Bags, clothes, branded. Are you willing to pay this kind of price for the branded goods?

A: If we can afford, of course.

M: Yourself, if you now go down Orchard Road, would you be willing? You need a blouse and it is from overseas and you like it, would you buy it?

A: Yes, if you like it very much and you can afford it.

M: If it is the same piece, similar looking, cheaper. Which would you buy?

A: Similar looking but branded? Then I will buy the cheaper one. It's exactly the same right?

E: If you want a Louis Vutton and you see a similar one, but are not the original one, I won't buy it then I would buy the branded one in the original shop.

B: This is a fake! (Laugh) For me, I prefer to go for something that is worth the price, if I go to a branded place, you are buying the brand name itself. It does not fit the purpose. Sometimes you are wearing something; you won't be able to see the price. You won't know the brand unless the person takes it out and show you, "Hey this is Guess, and this is Gucci!" I am a 'cheapo' (person who likes cheap things). As long as they look almost the same, I would go for the cheaper one.

C: I don't feel like buying branded because I don't like the design.

F: If it were me I would not buy branded. I usually don't like something with a label. I mean branded stuff.

M: So you are saying you are not willing to buy the branded, not because of the price, but because you don't like the design?

C: Not really so, not because of the design, but because I don't think it's worth buying.

M: Not really worth buying, so you feel that the price goes into the....

C: Marketing

D: Something branded, they will last longer. I believe they stand out among the rest. So it worth more the money cause branded last longer.

M: So you feel that there would be quality behind that name.

E: I seldom get branded goods. But for example I go to the US, and I need to get my father a gift. I was at the airport and I don't know what to get, because for man, it's really difficult. And I spoiled a branded belt and it costs hundred over dollars. If I buy it and tell him the price, he will scold me. But I still bought it because I thought I shouldn't go home empty handed. So under that kind of circumstances, when I am getting for somebody special, I don't mind but for myself, unless I have a good discount normally, I won't.

M: So why do you not want to pay to get it?

E: I feel I don't need the brand to enhance myself or my character. So if its good price and I think I can get finally goes in something branded, why not?

A: I think that branded has the quality there but you have to balance it up, now you have to see whether, I believe they have quality there but am I willing to part with that \$ 1000 dollars worth of this. If they charge me \$500, I find that it is ok I would buy it.

M: so to you, it's really like the bottom line pricing, so same quality, this price you won't get, if it is this price you will? Okay, Siew Chin?

F: For me if I can afford and I also trusted on their quality.

M: So for you it is not because of price but whether you can afford?

F: sometimes the price is expensive. And so it depends on do I really need it and how often am I going to use it.

C: it depends on the product like if it is a watch, I want a real good watch, and I don't mind investing \$5000 on an Omega. But other than that, if you ask me for shoes and clothes, I can get from Shanghai and Shenzhen that is almost like....parallel import, so why should I pay for it. But of course for some people, if you don't buy the real thing, you will have difficulty carrying yourself well because you are affordable and people think that is real. But of course some people even through, you can't buy the real thing, but because you could carry yourself well, you are affordable and people think that's real. Sometime when you are not that affordable, you are willing to pay, and people will think that is not real...that is how I feel.

M: So to you, the branding is supposed to be equated with status? Is that what you are trying to say?

C: In a way, people look at you and say that is branded. If I were to take something that is not branded, they will say, oh that's not – signature from Shanghai. So in a way, it equates with status, but it depends on individual.

H: I mean something like clothing; probably I won't spend so much. I don't see the point in buying branded. Anyway to me they carry the same. I think personally I like to buy because they are unique and they are different from everybody else...so in turn of clothing wise, I won't buy but of you are talking about TV, then I will get something branded because I know the quality is there. The warranty is there,

instead of just within 5 years, then you will have to get a new one. Paying for a TV that is branded then I would because the quality is there.

M: So for you, you will go for the branded because of the reliability?

H: yeah, then you also look at how often you are going to use it and how long it is going to be used for.

M: so if you have something that is branded, something because it is imported and it is pricy? for you does it attracted you? It is imported you know.

H: No, It is not really that important.

M: Because a lot of things like Gucci etc, they are more Italian, so do you have any branded stuff from the States that you are familiar with?

Nike

Calvin also from the States...

(Soft talking)

F: they have cheap shops there.

M: Are you willing to pay for such brands?

G: if I go there and I am attracted by one cloth which I did. I just buy, I don't care but if I am not attracted I won't buy, no matter what brands. Whereas for the spur of the moment.

F: More for the occasion you are buying for, it depends. For example if you are going to buy a watch, are you going to wear it everyday and smack it everywhere then I won't but if it is something that use one, then I would go for branded one. I would get a cheap \$10 one.

Are there products or brand names that you would pay more for that come from the United States?
DISCUSS

M: would you pay a more for those coming from the States than Europe?

A: more for states than Europe? I think it depends on the product you are talking about. European size are and nicer looking.

F: I know that they are branded but they made somewhere like Indonesia and you pay the same thing but it cost you even more from the states.

M: Would you pay more from product from the States?

D: It depends on what product it is, if it is clothing then if it comes from India or Korea,

H: if I want to buy I see the label made in Indonesia and Made in Us, I would go for the US because at least the quality would be better. I would just go for that.

M: so it is not so much the brand, okay.

Are there any flowers or plants that you would pay a premium price for that come from the United States?

DISCUSS

Can you imagine paying a premium price for special orchids grown in the United States? (Is that something you would do?)

M: Would you be willing to pay a premium price? That means higher price for imported prices.

A: if the marketing just because it is from the states, then no but if

F: it is a different variety and you cannot get anywhere else, then yeah.

M: if it is a variety you can't get anywhere else, you don't mind paying the price and not so much it is from the states.

D: difference? What are US orchid and Singapore orchid?

IF NO - Why is that hard to imagine?

EXPLORE costs of growing in the US; costs of shipping; time delay of shipping affecting freshness; low cost of growing in nearby countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, China; perception that flowers in US would not be as good as those in Singapore/SE Asia

IF YES – What would you pay for a stem of cut orchids from the US?

(Reference price mentioned previously for Singapore cut orchids)

A: 80 cents

M: if let's say there is a premium, what would you be the kind of premium you are willing to pay?

A: \$1

E: cannot exceed \$2

F: why should I pay more if it is the same species even if it is from USA?

G: if there is nothing unique. Normal I will feel the pinch.

D: if there is nothing special why should I pay more, I buy Singapore.

M: What would you pay for the unique one?

A: I think I would not pay more than 50% that means I would pay only 30 cents more.
(Soft talking)

E: there is a latest one that is white color. That is very expensive.

M: Is that local?

E: yes it's local. I don't know

D: 30, 40 bucks for a pot.

What varieties or types of orchids would be special enough to pay a premium price for? What price would you pay for a potted orchid plant from the US? (Reference Price mentioned previously for Singapore potted orchids)

A: 15

B: 25

E: don't know if I want to pay because I don't know how to take care of it,

A: I won't pay 100% more for that. I would pay 50% more.

M: You paid \$350 for yours. Can you tell which is local and what is imported .Can you tell the difference?

E: I think it is the size of the flower, I think, the bigger the flower. I got one for my mother in law, it looks unique, it has one big petal and it looks down and it was unique and I paid about \$60 bucks. It actually not really a big pot but it is really very big and unusual. Two long tendrils that come down.

M: You actually bought that from nursery?

E: No I actually bought that from Takashimaya. They had a booth. So we just buy.

M: Did you enquire where this orchid is from?

E: To me you know flowers doesn't really matter where it comes from unless you are saying that this from Holland because it has fragrance like roses, maybe I consider but orchid I don't know.

M: haven't imagine from overseas yet?

E: yeah, usually if it is not Singapore then it is around the region. I think it is from local because think the guy has a nursery in Singapore but he just had this booth and he was selling it.

M: so would you buy, you did, you bought the \$60, what make you want to buy that?

D: That was for wedding purpose.

M: And you did not have to pay for it?

D: I did, I bought it for my friend.

M: So you feel that you gave her that particular type? So anybody got anything thing to say about imported orchid?

C: I don't want the ordinary.

D: I have not seen how Singapore orchid is from different orchid, I think the latest one is where you can shop orchids from other countries.

M: so that means, after the person tells that this is imported orchids to you, you actually cannot tell the difference?

A: I went to Far East for; I think the guy told me that it was not local.

F: you can tell from the petals. Local I think tends they are smaller but overseas tends to be bigger, nicer.

M: You talking about orchids?

F: Orchids. Because of the weather and it put certain conditions.

M: so you think weather makes a difference, so what do you think the weather for orchids?

F: Supposed to be hot.

H: I think now with technology we can get any kind of species you know, I think every nursery is using the lab to do; they are come up with nicer species, bigger flowers, and colorful ones.

F: Sometimes it is novelty. I know Botanical Gardens have miniature seeds , those are grown without soil , I might pay a bit more, because there is high tech involved, so when I see that I know it is hard work, so I would buy it.

M: you buy it can survive?

F: you are meant to bring home and it can survive and then it can grow in that container and then you can repot it, it is encapsulated so you can bring it overseas and there would be no customs problems.

M: so that you don't mind paying a premium for? Because of the uniqueness of it.

F: there is high tech in it.

M: would you be able to tell me if there is any difference between plants? What do you think are the contributing factors to make the orchid look better?

G: Full time gardener

A: temperature

E: Aircon

C: I like to have the plants but I have no sunlight. Every time I buy, not enough sunlight, it dies so no more flowers. So she why don't you buy this? I bought from you 3 pots already but now end up just empty pots, because it dies off. No this is different this is local, this is grown from my garden you know the lady say it is from my garden, it is very easy to grow, you don't need too much sunlight. I mean if it

is easy to grow and so much attention, if the orchids is like that, I mean you still have to tender for it, not too much, we don't have a lot of time to look after the plant

We were talking earlier about certain products like Versace clothes or Chanel handbags that have very high prices and women are willing to pay because of the prestige or status of the brand name. Can you ever imagine orchids from the United States gaining status to the point that women in Singapore would be willing to pay a premium price for them.

M: So in summary whether it is imported is not the main issue but the species of the plant, how special, what are the added values of the plants have that will decide whether you are willing to pay a premium price for it or not?

F: And the amount of care that,

M: must not be something that is too difficult to.

M: So very good. Yeah I think that is what we like to check to see what your opinion on orchids is and if it is imported what price you are willing to pay. Do you have anything else you would like to add on? We only know that we have a client interested to know and find out certain, do some surveys and research into ...

F: free Flowers?

M: Free Flowers? I will tell them that someone is interested. So I think that is about it. Thank you very much for coming.

Thank you for joining our discussion tonight. As we promised, we have an honorarium for each of you. Please pick it up when you exit.

Attachment 2 - "Exploring Demand for Florida Orchids in Singapore"

